

**TRAFFIC AND PARKING BOARD PUBLIC HEARING
JANUARY 28, 2013**

DOCKET ITEM: 4

ISSUE: Consideration of a request to allow parking on the North side of the 3600 block of Wheeler Avenue to in front of the Normandy Hill Apartments.

APPLICANT: Alexandria Police Department

LOCATION: 3600 Wheeler Avenue

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the request to permit parking on the North side of the 3600 block of Wheeler Avenue extending from the Police Station visitor driveway on the east to the existing parking spaces in front of Spicer's Upholstery.

DISCUSSION:

The Alexandria Police Department has a need for additional parking on Wheeler Avenue. Due to above anticipated use of the community room at the Alexandria Police Department Headquarters, the capacity of the visitor parking lot has been exceeded during normal business hours.

There is currently a visitor parking lot with a capacity for approximately 50 vehicles. The capacity was determined during the planning of the new facility by surveying visitors to determine if they required parking and by conducting vehicles counts along Mill Road during business hours. From their study, it was concluded that a visitor parking lot with a capacity of 50 vehicles would be sufficient. The Public Safety Center (PSC) was a shared facility, so it was assumed that a capacity of 50 vehicles for the visitor parking lot at the new facility would provide ample parking for visitors.

The Alexandria Police Department previously conducted training at the PSC on a regular basis, but this training is now done at the new facility. The use of the community room at the Headquarters has been above the anticipated level, and the capacity of the visitor lot can no longer meet the demand.

In order to alleviate the parking shortage, the Alexandria Police Department requests that parking be allowed along the north side of Wheeler Avenue on the 3600 block across the street from the Police Station visitor driveway extending east to the existing spaces in front of Spicer's Upholstery. There is currently a parking aisle delineated with pavement markings, as well as a bike lane on the north side of Wheeler Avenue. The bike lane will be unaffected by the addition of these parking spaces. Staff recommends that parking be allowed up to 75 feet on either side of the Normandy Hills driveway entrance to ensure a safe sight distance for vehicles using this driveway.

The Normandy Hills Apartment complex was made aware of the request by City Staff and approves of the request to allow parking on the north side of Wheeler.

**Alexandria Police Headquarters Building
Wheeler Avenue Parking**

During the planning of the new facility, the capacity of the visitor parking lot was established using two methodologies. Surveying the visitor to the Mill Road facility during the normal work day was used to ascertain how they arrived at the building. The visitor was asked if public transportation, drop off or parking was used. Staff also conducted physical vehicle counts along Mill Road during the normal work day.

This information produced a visitor parking lot capacity of approximately 50 vehicles. It should be noted that the Public Safety Center (PSC) was a shared facility and the project team was very comfortable using the 50 vehicle number.

Prior to development, there was existing on-street parking on the south side of Wheeler Avenue. To address security concerns post development, the existing Wheeler Avenue on-street parking was relocated to the north side of the street during the DSUP approval process. This on-street parking would serve as possible overflow parking just as Mill Road at PSC.

The inclusion of a community meeting room was believed to add a small parking demand after normal business hours. The department previously conducted training at PSC on a regular basis as was included in the vehicle count numbers. Once we moved into the facility, the use of the community room was above the anticipated level. This increase in use outstripped the capacity of the Visitor Parking Lot during normal business hours.

To alleviate the parking shortage, we request the no parking sign be removed along the north side of Wheeler Avenue between the Normandy Hills driveway and the start of the parking aisle stripping. Using a setback will prevent visual obstruction of on-coming traffic for vehicles exiting the Normandy Hills driveway.

Sincerely,

Alexandria Police Department

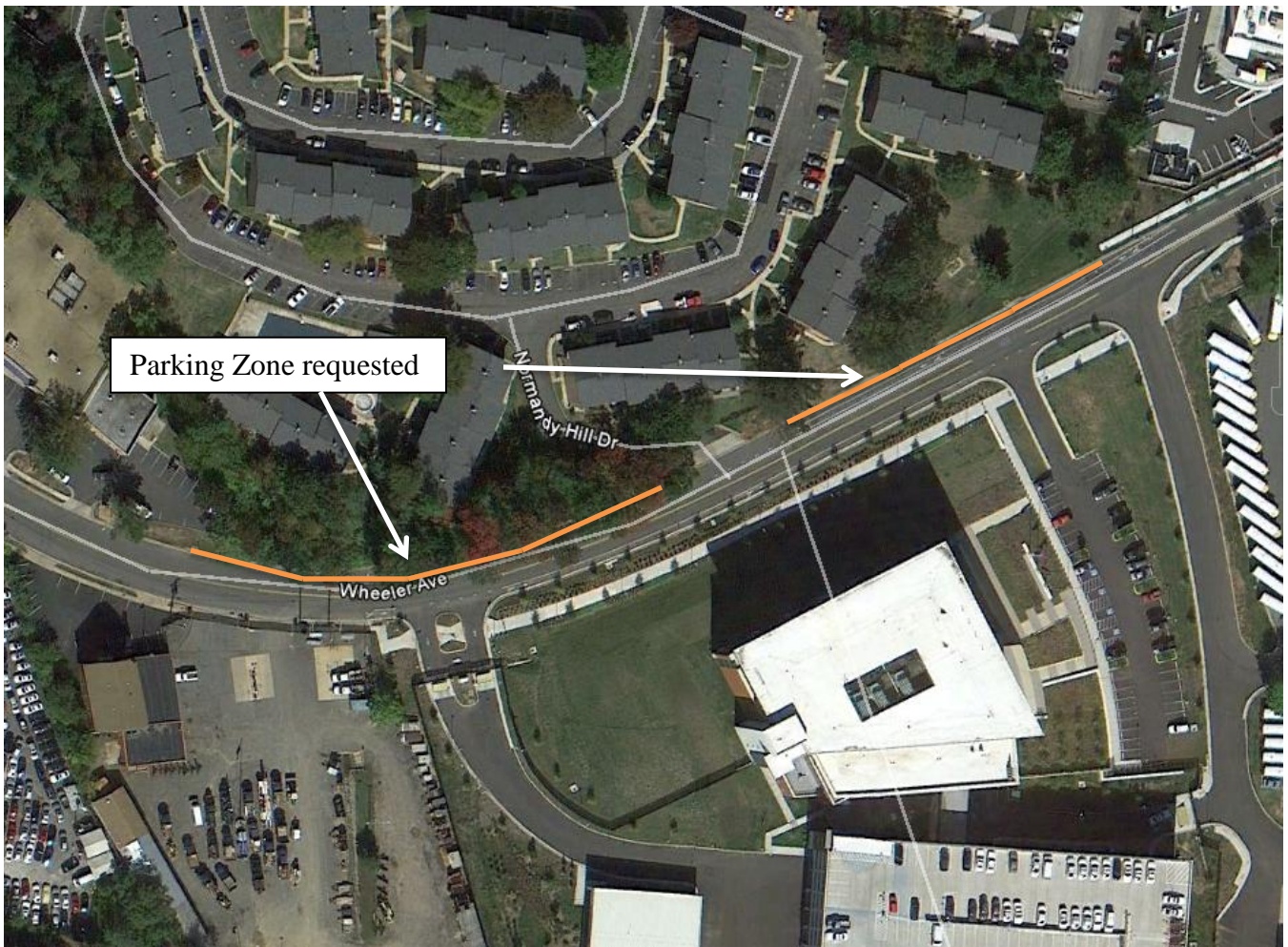
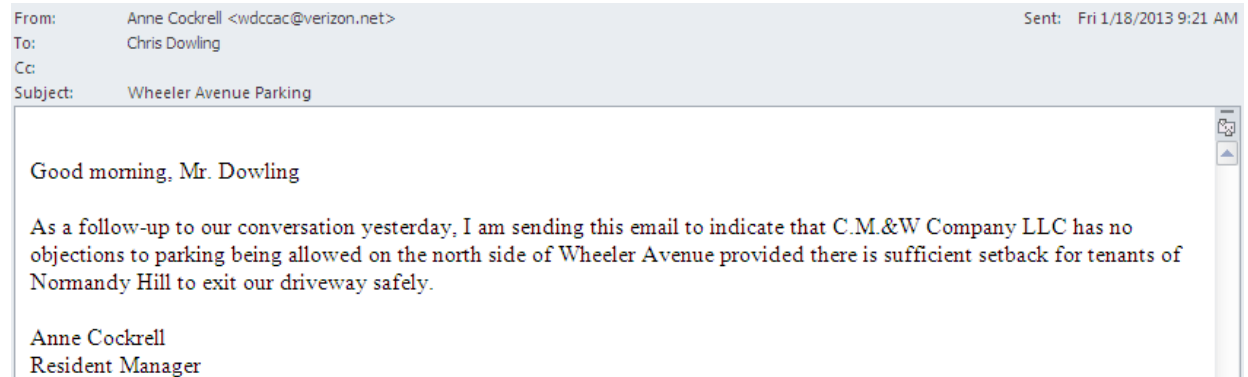


Figure shows an aerial shot of Wheeler Avenue showing the requested parking zone.



Figures showing the location of current No Parking restriction on Wheeler Avenue.

The following is an email from the Resident Manager approving of the request to add parking on the north side of Wheeler Avenue.



**TRAFFIC AND PARKING BOARD PUBLIC HEARING
JANUARY 28, 2013**

DOCKET ITEM: **5**

ISSUE: Consideration of a request to restrict left-hand turns (only allow right turns) out of the John Adams Elementary School driveway onto Rayburn Avenue weekdays 7:30 A.M. – 8:00 A.M. and 2:30 P.M. – 3:00 P.M.

APPLICANT: Alexandria City Public Schools

LOCATION: John Adams Elementary School & Rayburn Avenue

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approving the left-hand turn restriction out of the John Adams Elementary School driveway onto Rayburn Avenue on school days 7:30 A.M. – 8:00 A.M. and 2:30 P.M. – 3:00 P.M. .

DISCUSSION:

Alexandria City Public Schools is requesting to restrict left-hand turns out of John Adams Elementary School on weekdays between 7:30 A.M. and 8:00 A.M., as well as between 2:30 P.M. and 3:00 P.M. Currently there is one access point to John Adams Elementary School. Parents and teachers must enter and exit the school using a driveway off of Rayburn Avenue. The driveway entrance is located approximately 300 feet from the intersection of North Beauregard Street and Rayburn Avenue, and therefore does not hold a significant amount of queuing capacity. The congestion is made worse as school buses attempt to enter and exit the school as well. There are approximately 300 vehicles entering the school in the morning during school hours, and 150 of those exiting. In the afternoon, there are approximately 86 vehicles entering and 190 exiting. The green phase for vehicles traveling from Rayburn onto North Beauregard is 20 seconds, and this phase cycles every 2 minutes. These conditions cause significant congestion and delays on Rayburn Avenue, as well as in the school drop off zone. There is also a safety hazard should an emergency vehicle need to enter the school property. The amount of congestion can be a safety hazard to students walking to the school as there is increased vehicle and pedestrian conflicts. It also negatively affects the community surrounding the school, as the queuing on Rayburn causes delays while trying to access Beauregard Street from Rayburn Avenue.

Alexandria City Public Schools retained Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. to perform a study to address the existing circulation and parking issues with the John Adams Elementary School by collecting data, assessing existing conditions, coordinating with stakeholders, and developing recommendations. Near term solutions as well as mid- to long-term solutions that ACPS can implement as funding is identified and programmed.

The request to restrict left-hand turns during school hours will reduce congestion and stacking along Rayburn Avenue at the Beauregard Street signal. It will also reduce congestion with the John Adams site. The existing crossing guard can assist in monitoring the right turn-only. The safety for John Adams students will improve as there will be reduced conflicts between students and vehicles. Along with the restricted left-hand turn, the ACPS proposes, and staff strongly encourages, hiring “off-duty” police officers to provide additional enforcement and to monitor traffic flow on Rayburn Avenue during school hours. ACPS is willing to provide portable barricades and extra signage along Rayburn Avenue to prevent parents from using the first two service roads to turn around, should the neighborhood and City Staff approve. City staff is reluctant to approve of the barricades, but supports the additional signage to direct drivers to Reading. The barricades will not only cut off access from Rayburn Avenue to parents after dropping off or picking up their kids, but it will cut off access to residents living on the service road. ACPS also proposes that the school administration use its resources to encourage students and the families of its students to have their children ride ACPS School Buses. They also propose to work with City Transportation Demand Management (TDM) staff to reduce the amount of vehicles traveling to the school via outreach to parents and school staff. The City of Alexandria Staff supports and encourages the continued outreach to parents by the ACPS for this matter.

The ACPS has reached out to the surrounding communities, and has involved City Staff with their efforts. The details in full of this outreach can be seen in their request on the following pages. Their outreach has included Public Meetings, Staff Level Stakeholder Meetings, On-site Meetings with the Police Department and the City TDM Coordinator, Back to School Night information table, and communications with the local Civic Association.

There have been concerns from the community surrounding this request to restrict left-hand turns. These include reckless driving down Rayburn Avenue after turning right out of the school, U-turns down the public access roads, and parking in the cul-de-sac on Sibley Avenue. Staff believes that by hiring an “off-duty” police officer and by reaching out to parents to increase awareness of the issue, in addition to the left-hand turn restriction, there will be a positive impact on the John Adams Elementary School and the surrounding community by lessening congestion and delays and improving the safety on and near the school property.

Mr. Garbacz,

ACPS is requesting an item be considered at the January 28th meeting of the City Parking and Traffic Board. Below is our request and background information.

Request:

Restrict left-hand turns (only allow right turns) out of the John Adams Elementary School driveway onto Rayburn Avenue weekdays 7:30am-8:00am and 2:30pm-3:00pm.

Issues raised by community members include reckless driving down Rayburn Avenue, u-turns down the public access road, and parking in the cul-de-sac on Sibley Avenue. As part of the request, ACPS is proposing to hire "off duty" police officers to provide additional enforcement and monitoring during the peak school times, especially at the intersection of Rayburn and Harding, for one month after implementation and at additional times throughout the school year, if necessary. Additionally, ACPS will provide two barricades at the entrance to the service road off Rayburn and at the first cut-through (if deemed necessary by the neighbors), to prevent cars from traveling down the access road, if approved by the City. Finally, we are increasing education and awareness of our parents on this issue. If deemed necessary, extra signage along Rayburn to direct traffic to Reading Avenue will be provided. Concurrently, school administration is working to encourage more students to ride ACPS School Buses and coordinating with City Transportation Demand Management (TDM) staff to reduce vehicular traffic to the site, via outreach to parents and staff.

Background:

The campus layout at John Adams Elementary School poses many challenges to efficient traffic flow during student pickup and drop-off times. With only one access point, all school traffic must enter and exist through the intersection with Rayburn Avenue.

The green signal phase for Rayburn Avenue at the Beauregard Street traffic signal only lasts for approximately 20 seconds every two minutes. For the remaining time, school traffic turns left from the school driveway onto Rayburn and quickly fills up the space between Beauregard and the driveway. Once that space is full, no school traffic can move until the next 2 minute cycle of the traffic signal. This problem is worse when all the buses leave simultaneously.

Transportation Study:

ACPS retained Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. to perform a study to address the existing circulation and parking issues with the John Adams Elementary School by collecting data, assessing existing conditions, coordinating with stakeholders, and developing recommendations. The study identified near-term solutions as well as mid- to long-term solutions that ACPS can implement as funding is identified and programmed.

Study Recommendations:

One of the short-term solutions identified by the transportation study was to reroute existing left turns by parents onto Rayburn Avenue to turn right instead and use the signal at Beauregard and Reading Avenue. This will reduce congestion and stacking along Rayburn Avenue at the Beauregard Street signal and reduce congestion within the John Adams site. The existing crossing guard can assist in monitoring the right-turn only. This will also provide increased safety for John Adams students and reduce conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians. This proposal is one piece of a larger strategy to reduce parent drop-off/pickups within the site.

Another short-term recommendation from the study is being implemented concurrently with the turn-restriction proposal. School administration is working to encourage more students to ride ACPS School Buses and coordinating with City Transportation Demand Management (TDM) staff to reduce vehicular traffic to the site, via outreach to parents and staff. We believe it will take a combination of the efforts listed above to ease the congestion.

The long-term plan considers the implementation of the new road included in the adopted Beauregard Small Area plan. The site will be reoriented to provide more efficient organization of uses. The future collector street will separate bus and staff traffic from parent drop-off/pick-up and help organize traffic more efficiently. Relocating the playground will allow for connectivity with the public open space and constructing parking on the currently playground would combine all transportation uses on the south and east side of the school to make efficient use of the second driveway.

Other Alternatives Considered:

- Establish a “shuttle” route to reduce parent vehicle trip demand. Yearly operations and maintenance costs associated exceed the existing budget.
- Stagger school opening and closing times to spread out parent drop-off/pick-up activities. The Head Start Program currently opens 30 minutes after John Adams Elementary. Operational challenges with programming, staff schedules, and bus schedules make this proposal unfeasible.

- Adjust traffic signal timing at the Beauregard Street/Rayburn Avenue to reduce staking along Rayburn Avenue. Timing would affect the signal progression along Beauregard Street and the adjustment would not be adequate for reducing staking considerably.

Community Involvement:

- June 27, 2012: Staff Level Stakeholder Meeting. Included City Transportation and Environmental Services, Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, ACPS Facilities staff, ACPS Pupil Transportation, John Adams Administrators.
- June 28, 2012: Public Meeting held in John Adams Elementary School Library. The meeting was advertised through City and ACPS Communications Departments (including ACPS Daily Digest, social media, school website, City calendars and list-serves, robo-calls and posting meeting announcement fliers in neighboring apartment complexes and businesses). Presented data collection and field observation from traffic circulation and parking study. Solicited input on key issues, concerns, and possible solutions.
- July 25, 2012: Staff Level Stakeholder Meeting. Included City Transportation and Environmental Services, Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, ACPS Facilities staff, ACPS Pupil Transportation, John Adams Administrators.
- July 31, 2012: Public Meeting held in John Adams Elementary School Library. The meeting was advertised through City and ACPS Communications Departments (including ACPS Daily Digest, social media, school website, City calendars and list-serves, robo-calls and posting meeting announcement fliers in neighboring apartment complexes and businesses). Presented potential traffic circulation and parking solutions and obtained feedback.
- August 2012: On-site meetings with City Police Department staff, City TDM Coordinator. Other meeting with neighborhood HOA representative and JBG staff.
- September 18-19, 2012: ACPS & City Staff manned a table at Back to School Night
- December 12, 2012: Staff Level Stakeholder Meeting included City Transportation and Environmental Services and ACPS Facilities staff.
- January 8, 2012: Public Meeting held in John Adams Elementary School Library. The meeting was announced on December 21st and advertised through City and ACPS Communications Departments (including ACPS Daily Digest, social media, local media, school website, City calendars and list-serves, posting meeting announcement fliers in neighboring apartment complexes and businesses, emails to key stakeholders including City staff and Civic Association President). Presented results of transportation study, the turn restriction proposal and obtained feedback.
- August 24, 2012, November 6, 2012, November 16, 2012, November 19, 2012 and January 11, 2013: Emails to Civic Association and key City staff and community members responding to concerns raised by community members.
- September-January 2012: ACPS Staff solicited feedback and responded through email on turn restrictions from key stakeholder groups including the T&ES Department, Police Department, the neighborhood HOA, John Adams families and staff.
- January 17, 2012: Staff Level Stakeholder Meeting included City Transportation and Environmental Services and ACPS Facilities staff with key community members.



Figure shows the restricted left-hand turn exiting John Adams Elementary School and the resulting flow of traffic on Rayburn Avenue.





Figures show congestion at the entrance to John Adams Elementary School during school hours.

The following is an email from Ms. Helen Peterson to ACPS, a resident in the community surrounding John Adams Elementary school:

Dear Ms. Hammig,

I am writing in regard to the proposal to force cars to turn right as they exit the John Adams Elementary School. As a resident of Rayburn Avenue, this proposal is not acceptable since you are not taking the views of the residents into consideration. Forcing cars to go down Rayburn Avenue is not only dangerous for the non-John Adams school children that are picked up at two different school bus stops around Rayburn and Harding Avenues, where some drivers are currently doing U-turns, the extra traffic is also dangerous for the many pedestrians that are on their way to work, sometimes with children in tow. Moreover, with all of the U-turns occurring now, if the right hand turn is implemented, the traffic will become even heavier on a road that is not a major thoroughfare and that has not been designed to accommodate even the current level of traffic. This issue affects not only the residents of the townhouses but also the even larger number of residents that live in apartments that are located on Rayburn and which run a considerable distance up the street away from the school. Additionally, those of us who use public transportation to go to work do not need to be further delayed, than is already occurring, by additional traffic coming down Rayburn Avenue and doing a U-turn which will result in traffic chaos, not to mention safety issues. As it is, on many occasions I have missed my bus connection, at Southern Towers, due to the amount of traffic coming out of the school even with the current left hand turn system. Perhaps parents of students should be encouraged to use school buses or car pool. Moreover, it would be helpful if the crossing guard who directs the traffic did not so obviously favor the cars coming out of the school and hold up traffic driving up or down Rayburn Avenue, especially the DASH commuter bus, causing delays for residents who are trying to go to work. The school is composed of commuters and we live in this neighborhood. Considering the residents of Rayburn Avenue are paying taxes that support the school, the school should do all it can to be a good citizen in the local community. Have you considered starting school at an earlier or later time in the morning so as to avoid the peak rush hour? Such a change would also negate the need to have cars turn right when they depart from the school.

I understand that there was an earlier proposal for parents to pick up and let off children at a parking lot at one of the local businesses. This seems a sensible proposal. For example, the Clyde's restaurant is closed in the morning and in the afternoon when children are coming to and departing from school. There is a very large parking lot behind Clyde's, on the other side of the school fence. Perhaps that might be a good location for a pick up and drop off since the parking lot is located on a road that is not in a residential area but which leads directly to Beauregard Street, a major thoroughfare better equipped to handle large volumes of traffic compared to Rayburn Avenue. A small school entrance gate could be put in the area where the parking lot borders the school's playing fields.

It is unfortunate that there is no direct exit from the school to Beauregard Avenue but that does not mean that the residents of Rayburn Avenue should have to suffer the consequences. I sincerely hope that this new proposal is not put into effect since I feel very strongly about being late for work and will take up this issue at a higher level within the Alexandria City Government if the proposal is implemented.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Lindsay Peterson